

COMMENT

THE DESTINY OF
MANUSCRIPTS
SUBMITTED FOR
PUBLICATION IN THE
*ARCHIVES OF
INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE
AND TOXICOLOGY* OVER
THE PAST 21 YEARS

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This note concludes the last issue of the 50th volume of the *Archives* from an aspect that reveals the backstage of the journal. Manuscripts are blood of any journal and what the reader will find in the below figures are the results of a blood test.

Thanks to the information era it was reasonably easy to analyse the flow of manuscripts through the *Archives* from 1979 to 1999 and see – through numbers, however little they tell us – the destiny of 870 manuscripts received from foreign and Croatian authors by 5 November 1999.

There are a few pointers that give away the quality of a journal which the reader may wish to note. The first is the fluctuation of input that is best observed over a larger stretch of time. Figure 1 clearly shows that the *Archives*' input fluctuated considerably with the most prominent peaks occurring at a distance of approximately every four to six years. The reader may have already guessed that those peaks coincided with major congresses or other meetings in fields covered by the journal, which indeed considerably improved our »blood profile«. Such fluctuations, however, are hardly expected in top rating international scientific journals that, instead, have a steady and a heavy flow of manuscripts. In other words, Figure 1 rightly points out

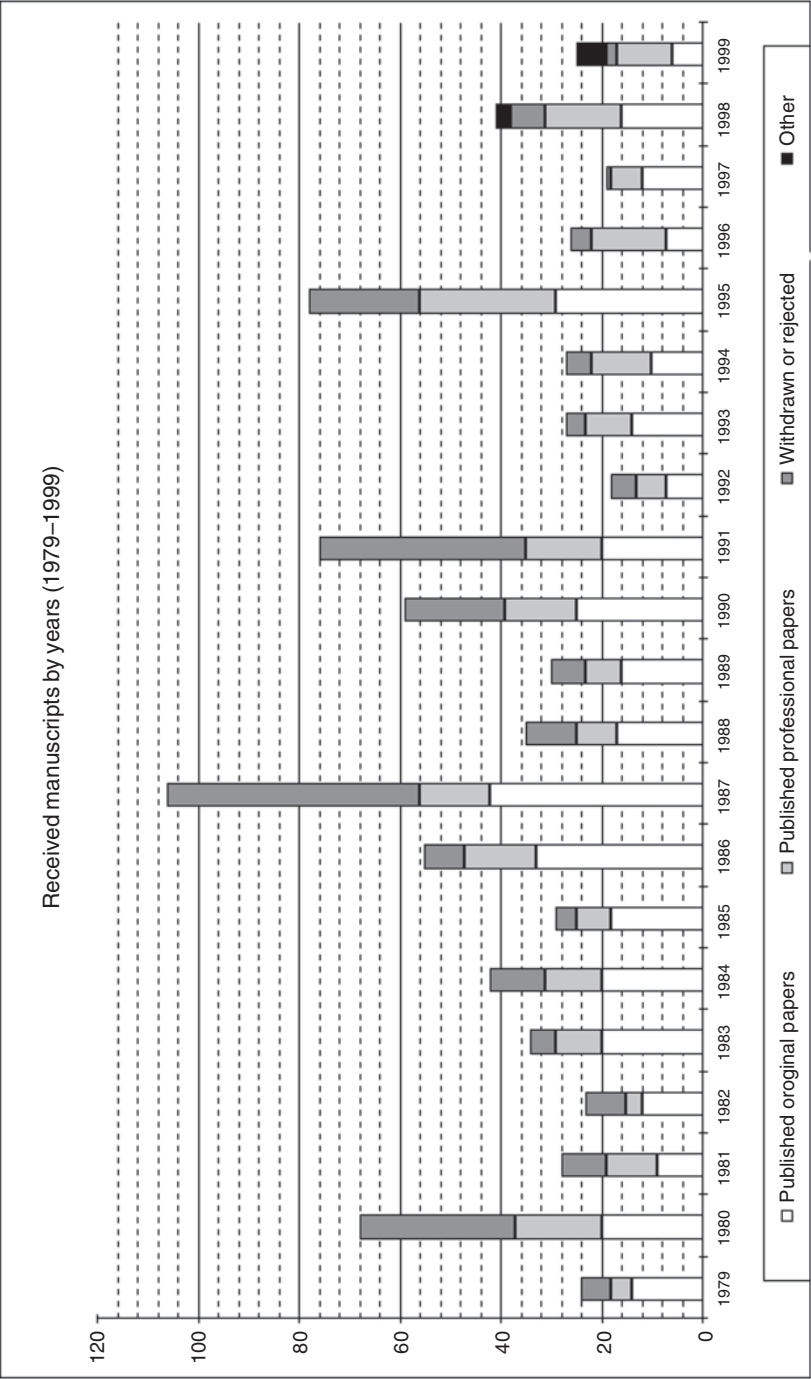


Figure 1 The flow of manuscripts through the Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology and their destiny by years (1979–1999)

the weakness of our journal and countless scientific journals of small nations such as Croatia. A steady and a strong flow imply a sustained interest of authors to publish in that and that journal which allows for a sustained quality of manuscripts and scientific achievement as the core of this argument. The intention of this seven-hundred-word essay is far from opening an issue about the interest of an author to publish in papers such as the *Archives* (1), but to state mere facts. Facts that follow certainly speak more to the advantage of the *Archives*. The reader may observe a regular pattern of interchanging peaks and troughs in Figure 1. Peaks keep around 60–70 and troughs around 20 manuscripts throughout the 21-year period. The fact would have gone unnoticed had not major changes occurred in that period. Croatia has dearly paid its break from the former Yugoslavia in the nineties: in lives and material and spiritual wasteland. The *Archives* has lost much of its readership and financial support. Yet, the figures do not show it and I dare say that it is nearly miraculous how the journal managed to keep the flow of the antebellum years and persevere. Much thanks to the wise editorial policy and outstanding endeavour of but a few individuals.

The second quality pointer is how many received manuscripts are eventually or instantly rejected. It is a common perception that the top international scientific journals refuse between 50% and 70% of received manuscripts. Between 1979 and 1999, the *Archives* refused 260 manuscript or 30% (Figure 2). It would be interesting to

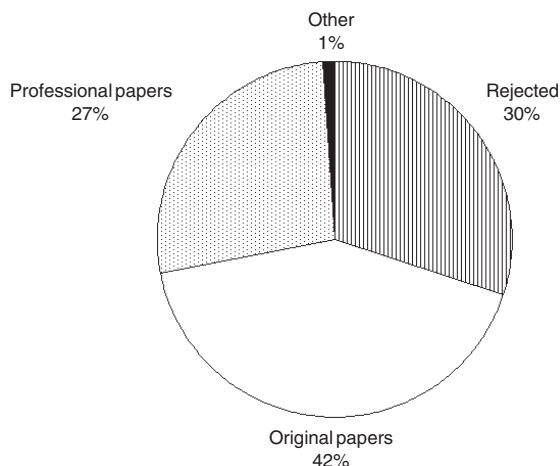


Figure 2 The destiny of manuscripts for the entire corpus received in the Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology between 1979 and 1999

compare this finding with other Croatian scientific journals – may this be a challenge to our colleagues to make their figures known – and see where we stand. I believe that even internationally, there is little room for humility.

The third pointer is the portion of original papers (either full or short communications) in the published corpus. Figure 3 shows that 61% of all manuscripts published in the *Archives* were papers of original scientific value. The reader may wish to note that all manuscripts in the *Archives* have to pass through a well-trodden procedure that involves a review by at least two referees (2, 3), which is the least unreliable

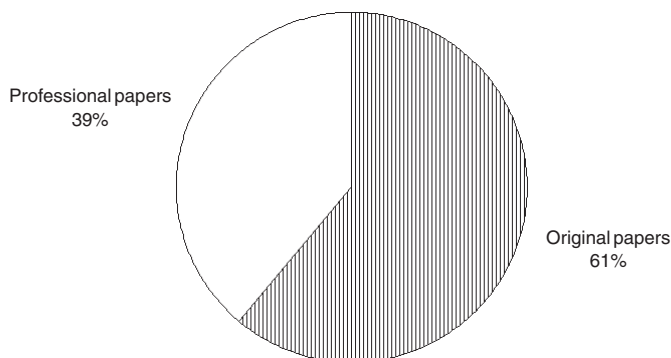


Figure 3 *Ratio between the original and professional papers published in the Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology (manuscripts submitted between 1979 and 1999)*

method of scientific evaluation of one's peers (4). The above argument should stress the value of what we in the editorial feel is a high percentage of original papers with respect to professional papers which include observations and reviews.

A glance at Figure 1 is enough to see that the *Archives* is a small journal. Yet, size is not all that matters. What matters is the uniqueness of the *Archives* in the region (5). What matters is that the journal has strived for quality and regularity for 50 years and has kept the pace pretty well despite substantial obstacles. Finally, what matters is that the journal's crown jewels are its about 50 regular and 200 occasional top international scientists who review the manuscripts out of enthusiasm and high regard for the *Archives*. In our effort to reach broader international coverage¹, a new policy is taking shape. That of extending regional leadership and restoring readership lost to war. One step at a time.

LITERATURE

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¹ At the moment, the journal is included in the world information network through 17 referral journals. The reader may wish to consult the back cover.